

Statement for Budget Public Hearing- August 31, 2010

County Executive Kathleen Falk, Dane County Board Supervisors, Members of the Health & Human Services Board, Human Services Director Lynn Green

Good evening. My name is Paul Yochum and I am here tonight as a parent.

Our daughter, Sara, age 34, has multiple disabilities, with primary disability as seizure disorder. She is paralyzed on her right side and walks with a support brace. Sara currently lives at home and works part-time. We serve as her caregivers. Sara is part of the Dane County Human Services system as she receives vocational support services and Support Broker services. Thanks for continuing to share in the care of Sara! Thanks for taking the initiative in the 2010 budget to increase the levy to fund our necessary programs.

Sara's disability didn't start out at birth. She was 5 ½, second semester Kindergarten in 1982, when she had her first seizure. And she continued to have seizures. There was nothing at the time that could stop Sara's seizures so she continued to seize 24/7. She was hospitalized twice here in Madison at St. Mary's before we took her to St. Louis Children's Hospital. There, they were to try brain surgery but instead, they could not operate. The surgeon was very concerned that if he did, that Sara would never speak again. She had already lost her speech. So, more drug therapy was administered and Sara, after 6 weeks at SL Children's Hospital, came back home. She was on so many medications that she was either in a high-back positioning chair and/or a custom wheelchair. We ended up hospitalizing her again in 1983 at St. Mary's where her neurologist placed Sara in a drug-induced coma for seven days. We think that the drug coma did work because Sara was placed on only three medications (vs 6). Now that her seizures were reasonably controlled, she was able to continue all of her therapies, occupational, speech, physical. She eventually got out of the wheelchair, started walking with a support brace, and Sara has been "rehabbed" a couple of different times over the years. Still seeking seizure control after all these years, Sara has shown what can be done with interventions and a caring system.

Marcia and I did wonder at times over the years, "what Sara would have been, could have been, without the disabilities. But we didn't wonder long for we learned many years ago that you really need to look at the present, look at how things are now, and then try to make the present and future better. With your continued help, we feel that we are doing that.

We think that you have to do that as well. Take a look at the present, look at how things are now and make the present and future better in Dane County. Thanks for taking the initiative with all of us to do that!

Paul & Marcia Yochum, Parents
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